

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.

No. VIII.

JUNE, 1833.

Vol. I.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

THE war of opinion has fairly begun, and though there may be periods of comparative neutrality, yet the war of opinion is likely to advance. "The human mind is starting with new eagerness in the course of discovery; the magic influence of authority has sunk to rise no more; evidence alone will, in future, be accepted as proof; all systems will be examined; all creeds will be tried; all churches will be weighed in the balance of revelation; and all opinions will be sifted."

There are those who deprecate this state of things—they are dissatisfied in this matter with the spirit and manners of the age—they denounce all theological discussion as an unhallowed contest, and pronounce, with very unnecessary indignation, a heavy woe, on those inquiring spirits with whom it originated, and by whom it is carried on. From this opinion, we must record our dissent. We have long been convinced that *truth* can never suffer by fair, and full, and impartial discussion. It courts, it encourages full investigation. We concur in opinion with an eminent writer, when he expresses his belief—that by the various and conflicting winds of doctrine that are rising and murmuring along the horizon, every light will be blown out but that of truth: and all the devices of error will be scattered like chaff upon the mountains."

We are aware, indeed, that even theological controversy has its dangers, and that frequently the theological combatant returns from the arena of controversy, crowned with laurels as a controversialist, but fearfully marred in the features of his character as a christian. Instead, however, of sounding the trumpet of retreat to any of these noble spirits who are engaged in defending the "truth as it is in Jesus," or in contending "for the truth once delivered to the saints," we would encourage them to proceed in the hallowed enterprise. Their efforts will be crowned with eminent success. Error will die, and truth will flourish.

While, however, we cannot regret the inquiring spirit of the

age, and while we view the progress of passing events, as indicating the speedy approach of more felicitous times, we are fully convinced that the character of the age imposes on all who profess our holy religion, the duty of adorning their profession by cultivating and displaying a spirit of love. We feel that this duty is not only binding on us, but that it becomes us, because of the position we occupy, to persuade all within the sphere of our influence to "walk in love, as Christ has loved them."

The nature of christian love is often imperfectly understood, and it would seem desirable, in consequence, to ascertain what it means. What then is christian love? It is not natural affection or private friendship—for these, though excellent in themselves, may co-exist with the selfishness and ungodliness of unrenewed hearts. It is not charity, in the modern acceptation of that word, for the apostle Paul supposes that there may be benevolence and liberality where there is no charity or love. See 1 Cor. xiii. 3. It must not be identified with mere philosophical benevolence. This is often displayed by patriots and philanthropists, in their efforts to promote the temporal amelioration of their species. But as these efforts, though noble in themselves, are often conducted without any reference to christian principle, and without any recognition of the authority of christian law, we conclude, therefore, that christian love is something more than philosophical benevolence or mere philanthropy.

The distinction between mere philanthropy, or love to man, *as man*, and christian love, or love to christians, *as such*, is plainly recognised by Christ and his inspired apostles. Thus, the apostle Peter admonishes christian brethren to add to "godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity." In these words we are admonished to cultivate the principle of brotherly kindness or love to the brethren *as such*, and to add to this grace, the principle of charity, or love to man, *as man*. The same distinction seems to be recognised in the following words of the apostle John:—"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you." These words may remind us of the occasion, so interesting and so solemn, on which our Lord emphatically enjoined the duty of christian love. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to

another." If there be no distinction between mere philanthropy and Christian love, how could this be designated a *new* commandment? Did it not always constitute one part of man's duty, to love his fellow man? Was not this requirement embodied in the ancient law? Did not that law require "love to his neighbour" as well as love to his God? The duty thus solemnly enjoined had not ceased; it arose from the relation in which man stands to his fellow—and while that relation continues, the duty must remain binding. That it was binding at the time when our Lord gave his new commandment, is evident from this, that our Lord expounded the law as still requiring love to God, and love to man. See Mark xii. 31. Why then, was this commandment designated *new*, as it is obvious that love was required by the old and unrepealed law? The explanation usually given on this subject, is, that under the present dispensation, the duty of cultivating the principle of love, has been revealed with more clearness, and enforced by more powerful motives. We consider that this solution of the apparent difficulty is by no means satisfactory. Under the present dispensation, the duty of loving the Lord our God is revealed with greater clearness, and enforced by more powerful motives, and yet, the commandment requiring this "reasonable service" is not designated *new*. The solution of the difficulty will be found in the distinction we have noticed. Under the former dispensation, the law required love to man—love to every man, irrespective of character or religious attainments; it required love to our neighbour, that is, to every man—it required the most diffusive benevolence, to every member of the human family. This love is still required. Christianity does not dispense with it. There dwells not on earth the man—whatever be his colour—whatever be his country—or even, whatever be his character—whom we are not bound to love, and whose welfare we are not bound, as far as in us lies, to promote. But superadded to this duty is another, corresponding with the spirit of the present dispensation—it is the duty which disciples of Christ owe to each other—it is love to one another, from the principle of love and attachment to him, their common Lord.

Such, then, is christian love—a pure, holy, and ardent affection for christians, *as such*; love to the brethren—not because of the common brotherhood in which they were born—not because of the common ties which bind man to man—but because they are partakers of like precious faith—because they

are justified by the same righteousness—sanctified by the same spirit—adopted into the same family—and the heirs, at last, of the same inheritance.

We have said that it is love to christians as such, and we are anxious that this truth should be remembered. We may love christians, and yet not possess christian love—just for this cause, we do not love them because they are christians. Those who are dear to us because of natural relationship, may be christians and the objects of our love; and yet, the reason why we love them, may be, not because they are christians, but because they are our “brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.” Thus, also, we may obtain favour from those who are christians; we may love them, and yet our reason for loving them, may be a knowledge—not of their devotedness to God, but of their kindness to us. When, therefore, we examine—and who ought not to examine?—whether we are partakers of this christian grace, let the inquiry be not merely, do we love christians—but do we love them because they are christians—because they bear the image of the heavenly—because in them we discover the moral image of him, “whom having not seen we love?”

These remarks prepare us for the conclusion, that christian love is not *sectarian* in its character. It is confined, indeed, to those who appear to possess christian character, but it is not confined to those alone who may agree in all minor and non-essential matters. We know, indeed, that those who are connected with us as members of the same christian church have the first and strongest claims on our love. Their interests we are bound specially to seek; their wants, if they have any, specially to supply: but we envy not the feelings of the man, who can say—and many, we fear, do say—“grace be with all them, who agree with *us* in all things, who worship according to *our* forms, who pronounce with us the Shibboleth of the same party.” No! christian love will not limit its regard to the narrow boundaries of any ecclesiastical enclosure, but extends them to the whole “general assembly and church of the first born.” Be it our’s, then, to say in that spirit of christian catholicity which characterizes genuine christian love, “grace be with *all* them that love our *Lord Jesus Christ* in sincerity.”

Farther, christian love is not a latent principle in the heart: it is not inactive; it is fervent, active, operative. Those who are under its influence will not love in word only; they will love in deed and in truth. It will so manifest itself by appro-

late effects in the whole life, as strikingly to mark them out as the disciples of Emanuel. "By this" said he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Its practical effects will appear in the conscientious discharge of those sacred duties which christians owe to each other. Are any of them in affliction?—love will sympathize in their sufferings, and use all the means which are practicable, to alleviate their distress. Are any of them hungry?—love will give them meat; thirsty?—love will give them drink; strangers?—love will take them in; naked?—love will clothe them; sick in prison?—love will visit them. Is any of them "overtaken in a fault?"—love will restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Does a brother err from the truth?—love will employ all the means which christianity sanctions to "convert him from the error of his ways, and thus to save a soul from death." Love will cherish no unkind feelings toward any members of the household of faith; it lays aside "all malice, and all guile, and all crookedness, and envies, and all evil speakings." In all its intercourse with the Israel of God, "it suffereth long, and is kind; it envieth not, it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, it doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things, endureth all things."

In conclusion, let the reader remember, that christian love is essential to christian character. There is no christianity without it; there may be eloquence, there may be piety, there may be burning zeal, there may be splendid liberty—but all, all are vain unless there be love; for, "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and, though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing; and, though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Let all, then, cultivate, and let all display in its practical effects, this holy principle of love. It tends to beautify the church, to benefit the world, and to glorify God. It will be, not only a badge of their discipleship, but only an evidence to others of the sincerity of their christian profession, but an evidence to their own hearts, that they have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear son—for, we know, that we have passed from death to life, because we

love the brethren." Thus, cultivating a spirit of christian love, we shall have "the SPIRIT itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD." C.

PRACTICAL HINTS ON PRAYER.

WHO, that believes prayer to be *power with God*, could be careless respecting its exercise? Yet the *late* attendance of many at public worship, and the early departure of others, as well as the general neglect of family and private prayer, furnish melancholy evidence how little it is prized. The sermon is the great object, both with minister and people; and addresses to God in prayer seem to be accounted of very secondary importance. The minister prepares accurately for addressing the people, but without any preparation, he ventures to address God. He and his people go without preparation into the presence of their Maker; they ask for whatever happens to cross the rambling mind of the speaker; they jumble petitions with thanksgivings, and adorations with confessions: and having run on thus, for three quarters of an hour, or perhaps a whole hour, without any one definite object in view, is it surprising that they should so often ask and receive not, because they are amiss?

Let none presume to act as the organ of a public assembly in prayer, without previous mental preparation. Let every one have a definite object in his prayer. Is he a petitioner, and yet has he not his mind full of his subject, and is he not ready to pour forth his full heart to Him who is the hearer of prayer?

Let him never make long prayers—we do not say that a long prayer is sinful, but we have no hesitation in saying, as a general rule, that no public prayers should be long. Prayers in public an hour long, as we have often heard them, are an outrage on all propriety. If a given time is to be spent devotionally, there must be a change of exercise—human nature demands it. It is most unsuitable, that prayers should be occupied through a considerable part of their length, with majestic descriptions of the character and perfections of God. Young ladies writing out fine prayers for effect, take a pleasure in culling the most sublime and awful scriptural representations of God, and sticking them in the front of their prayers. Such prayers may be accounted very grand, but they are really very profane; and no mind weighed down with the burden of the Lord would

ere to tamper so carelessly with things so sacred. Let introductions to prayer be short and appropriate.

When praying in public, beware of suffering yourself to be seduced to attempt a fine prayer. Oh! it is awful to sport the most sacred things for the sake of effect, and to prostitute the great names, and titles, and attributes of the eternal, to the purpose of rounding a period or finishing a climax.

Neither dare to use the names and attributes of God merely for the purpose of giving solemnity to your prayer. It is presumption in the extreme. When in connexion with a petition, confession or thanksgiving, a name or attribute of God is used, let it be appropriate to the subject: nothing is more insulting to all good feeling than the inappropriate or too frequent use of such names or attributes.

Beware, also, of the frequent recurrence, either of interjectional expressions, or of favourite phrases. A superabundance of Oh's or Ah's destroys seriousness, instead of increasing it; they are the offspring of turgidity, not of fervour.

As you value your soul's peace, never commence praying with the determination of trying how much you can say. It is horrible. When will men cease to insult their Maker, for the paltry honour of talking long? Who is there that cannot talk long? Shall a minister of Jesus mock heaven for the sake of gaining a prize which any old wife in his neighbourhood could bear away—the prize of talking without ceasing. Yet, absurd as it is, how many times have we heard ministers and others, in leading public prayer, coming again, and again, and again, to a close, and just as every one expected a conclusion, starting off once more on some new strain, which the use of some concluding expression chanced to suggest; and so going on till all devotion had evaporated, and all patience had been exhausted. Let us have no preaching prayers either. Preaching is very good in its own place, but prayer is not that place. It is no apology for violating the character of prayer, that you wish to seize on the opportunity thus afforded for preaching the truth.—Preaching prayers are sometimes used by skulking ministers, and others who have not the honesty to go right up to men, and tell them the truth; but very often they are merely for the purpose of being sufficiently lengthy, and occupying the time which a spoiled congregation require, according to custom, to be kept on their legs.

The very forms of expression in which large portions of such prayers are couched are sufficient to expose their absurdity. "Thou knowest, O Lord," &c. is a very common plan of haul-

ing in a piece of a sermon or of some doctrinal discussion, or some complaint upon a neighbour, or a neighbouring church ; as though information were thus communicated to the Omniscient, or as though he were solicited to become a party in some petty brawl.

Those traditionary expressions, too, that are stitched here and there, as purple patches on prayers, we cannot away with ; very often in the place in which they are brought forward they bear no meaning. Floating about in the mind of the speaker, they are produced as a fine thing, or else they serve to keep up the sound for a little in the midst of a vacancy of thought. Some of these traditionary expressions were originally texts of scripture, but they either have lost so much in the wear by being so long handed from parent to child, or they have received such additions by way of ornament, (for few are satisfied with the simple grandeur of the naked text,) that they can hardly be recognized now as scripture at all.

All learned prayers, all stiff and formal prayers, all cold and heartless prayers, are great abominations. Frequently, the time is spent in endeavouring to get up into a right frame of praying, which should be employed in praying ; and no wonder, when men come into the presence of God, without having first seriously thought of their wants, or looked for the promised assistance of the spirit, to guide them in prayer.

Let petitions be appropriate to God's promises. We need not expect to receive, except we ask what God has promised. And when we thus ask, let us ask, believing that we shall have it. What answer would people, in general, return to you, if you asked them had they yet received the blessings for which they prayed last Sabbath, or last year ? They would stare in your face with surprise. They had no serious expectation of getting the things for which they asked. Why then should they have them ? Is it any discredit to God, not to give what people don't want ? Let us ask, therefore, as persons in need ; let us look and wait for an answer to our prayers.

People should help their ministers by their prayers. What a consideration for a minister ! how encouraging to him in his work, to think that in the private assemblies of households of faith, throughout his congregation, as also in the more public meetings of them that fear the Lord, he is a special subject of prayer, for a blessing on his labours, for a strengthening of his hands in every good work ! Thus, the hearts of ministers and people are knit together in love ; thus, they are fellow-helpers of each other's joy ; and thus, the ambassador of Jesus will

as many as his hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the
of the Lord Jesus.

CONVERSATIONAL REMARKS OF THE LATE
ROBERT HALL.*

IN the course of some remarks on various theological writers
our own times, Mr. Hall said, "Dr. Smith is the best bib-
lic critic with whom I am personally acquainted; and I should
rank him one of the most learned theologians now alive." On
asking, If he did not consider Archbishop Magee superior
ability, and equal in learning to Dr. Smith? he replied, with
usual decision—"Not nearly equal in learning, Sir; I do
not suppose that Archbishop Magee knows any thing about
German critics, with whom Dr. Smith is intimately ac-
quainted—and from whom, notwithstanding all their absurdity
and impiety, much may unquestionably be learned. There is
one thing," he added, "in Dr. Smith's work, much to be la-
mented; and that is, the tone of excessive lenity maintained
towards his opponents. In consequence of this, his reasonings
will not produce an effect proportioned to their intrinsic force;
and his readers are tempted to regard the opinions which he re-
cites with far less horror than they deserve. The proper tone in
theological controversy is, I imagine, somewhat between Bishop
Horsley's intolerable arrogance and asperity, and Dr. Smith's
arrantable softness and urbanity."

It was interesting and amusing to observe how Mr. Hall's
refined sensibility to literary beauty intermingled with, and
qualified the operation of his principles and leanings, both as a
Christian and Dissenter. Of this I recollect various instances;
but shall give only one. While conversing respecting Arch-
bishop Magee, his talents, sentiments, conduct, &c., I quoted
as a proof of his high church principles, a remark from a charge
recently published; it was to this effect:—"That the Roman
Catholics have a church without a religion; the Dissenters have
a religion without a church; but the establishment has both a
church and a religion. Mr. Hall had not heard the remark
before, and was exceedingly struck with it. "That, Sir," he
exclaimed, smiling, "is a beautiful saying. I have not heard

* The person with whom these conversations were held, is the Rev.
Balmer, of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

so fine an observation for a long time. It is admirable, Sir. You admire it, I presume, for its point, not for its truth.—*Hall.* “I admire it, Sir, for its plausibility and cleverness; it is false, and yet it seems to contain a mass of truth. It is an excellent stone for a churchman to pelt with.”

The following opinions were expressed by Mr. Hall, respecting various writers in theology:—

“I have learned far more,” said he, “from John Howe than from any other author I ever read. There is an astonishing magnificence in his conceptions. He had not the same perception of the beautiful as of the sublime; and hence his endless subdivisions. This was, in part, the fault of his age—but he has more of it than many of the writers of that period, than Barrow, for example, who was somewhat earlier. There was, I think, an innate inaptitude in Howe’s mind for discerning minute graces and proprieties, and hence his sentences are often long and cumbersome. Still he was unquestionably the greatest of the puritan divines. Perhaps ‘Baxter’s Saint’s Rest’ is fitted to make a deeper impression on the majority of readers than ‘Howe’s Blessedness of the Righteous.’ Baxter enforces a particular idea with extraordinary clearness, force, and earnestness. His appeals to the conscience are irresistible. Howe, again, is distinguished by calmness, self-possession, majesty and comprehensiveness; and, for my own part, I decidedly prefer him to Baxter. I admire exceedingly his ‘Living Temple,’ his Sermon on the ‘Redeemer’s Tears,’ &c.; but in my opinion, the best thing he ever wrote, is his ‘Defence of the Sincerity of the Gospel Offer.’ I refer to the treatise called the ‘Reconcilableness of God’s Prescience of the Sin of Men, with his Counsels, Exhortations, and whatever other means he used to prevent them.’ This I regard as the most profound, the most philosophical, and the most valuable of all Howe’s writings.”

Mr. Hall made some inquiry respecting Dr. Henry the historian, once a minister in Berwick, and afterwards colleague of Dr. Macknight, the commentator, in one of the churches in Edinburgh: I informed him that from all I had ever heard I believed Dr. Henry must have been a very dry and uninteresting preacher. This led to a reference to the well-known anecdote, relative to these two individuals; according to which the one, when coming to church on a Sabbath morning, having got his clothes wet by a heavy rain, asked his colleague to officiate for him. “Go into the pulpit,” said the other, “and you will be dry enough.” Some doubt having been expressed

Each of the two it was to whom this remark was made, Mr. Hall observed—"I suppose, Sir, it was applicable to both." Immediately checking himself, he added, "And yet I should think that, to an intellectual audience, an audience that had a relish for scripture exposition, Macknight must have been interesting, if the discourses which he preached resembled his published writings." "Pray, Sir," I said, "do you admire Macknight as a commentator?" "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I very much; I think it would be exceedingly difficult, indeed, to come after him in expounding the apostolic epistles. I admit, at the same time, that he has grievous deficiencies. There is a lamentable want of spirituality and elevation about him. He never sets his foot in the other world, if he can get a hole to step into in this; and he never gives a passage a turning which would render it applicable and useful in all cases, if he can find in it any local or temporary allusion. He takes fearful havoc, Sir, of the text on which you preached today. His exposition of it is inimitably absurd." The text referred to was Ephesians i. 8—"Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence;" and the wisdom and prudence are explained by Macknight, not of the wisdom of God, as displayed in the scheme of redemption, but of the wisdom and prudence granted to the apostles to enable them to discharge their office.—*Memoir of Hall.*

ANTIQUITY OF THE FREQUENT OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

To the Editors of the CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.

IT has been gratifying to many of your readers who desire an increase of the spirit and power of christianity among us, to learn from your last number, that the Secession Church, Broughton Place, Edinburgh, with their excellent Minister, Mr. John Brown, grandson to Brown of Haddington, have commenced a more frequent observance of the Lord's Supper, having resolved to celebrate that ordinance every two months. This is not a solitary case. In Glasgow, the communion has been administered quarterly, in the Secession Church, under the ministry of such men as Drs. Dick, Mitchell, Kidston, &c., for many years. In Paisley, under the ministry of Dr. Ferriar, the practice of communicating monthly, if I mistake not, has long since been established.

Several indications of a disposition to revive frequent com-

munion appear in the Established Church of Scotland also. The late venerable Dr. Erskine, one of the standard-bearers of orthodoxy, when the Evangelical party was far outnumbered and overpowered by the "Moderate," or Anti-Evangelical party, in the General Assembly, wrote strenuously on behalf of frequent communion in his *Theological Dissertations*. Last year, the Rev. H. Grey, of Edinburgh, with his Kirk Session at the request of a large body of communicants, began to dispense the Lord's Supper four times, instead of twice in the year. The Presbytery of Edinburgh condemned this as a departure from the ordinary practice. The Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, however, in November last, reversed the condemnatory sentence of the Presbytery. The minority appeal to the ensuing General Assembly. "Should the Assembly," says Chambers, in an *Edinburgh Periodical*, "affirm the reversal of the Presbytery's decree, a very important victory will be achieved by the evangelical over the moderate party in the church, serviceable to the interests of genuine piety."

In the Secession Church in this country, an effort has been made in a few congregations to administer the Lord's Supper more frequently. For a number of years, the Rev. Thomas Millar, of Cookstown, and his Session, with the church under their inspection, have observed the communion quarterly.

A similar frequency has also been observed by the Rev. David Stuart, Union Chapel, Dublin, and the church under his care.

In the General Synod of Ulster, some ministers are reviving the frequency in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

In the Church of England, the Evangelical and zealous ministers, partaking of the revival spirit which God seems sending on the different churches, celebrate the Lord's Supper generally, I believe, monthly.

In the Congregational Church—a church fruitful in eminent men, from Owen to Doddridge and Watts, and from Watts to Wardlaw,—it has been the usage, every Lord's Day, to spread the table of the Lord.

All who love Christ, will keep his institutions. The Lord's Supper especially commends itself to the hearts of Christians—"Do this," says Christ, "in remembrance of me—my love, my sufferings, mine atoning death. This is the law; and the Christian obeys it. This is his tender entreaty and the appeal carries our affections; our sense of gratitude is touched, and overcome; the love of Christ constraineth us. We cannot forget—we cannot neglect—we feel that we ought not, must not, cannot but "do this, in remembrance of him

en? At what times? Shall we not do this in remembrance of him—*Oft*?

“Oft the sacred rite renew?”

How oft the sacramental supper should be celebrated, our Lord has not enjoined. Much is left to christian wisdom, to convenience, to circumstances of time and place. But there is a cloak for carelessness or carnality. The language of Scripture, the practice of the apostolic age, and the recorded usage of the three first centuries, together with the sentiments of the Reformers, and of the most eminent modern divines, are all in favour of frequency in the participation of the Lord's Supper. The most formidable objection usually made in conversation, to frequency of communion, is an allegation of novelty. Should this be substantiated, the question should be abandoned at once. The religion of Christ was fixed and settled eight hundred years ago, when scripture was closed. Innovation is corruption. Whatever is new is false; new, I mean, in relation to the commandments and institutions of Christ, as Christ gave and left them. “What thing soever I command you, says God, observe to do it: Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” We are required to keep, as the Westminster Catechism observes, *pure* and *entire*, such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his Word. In religion, every commandment of men, every human tradition, should be shaken off, as Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire.

What saith the Scripture? Referring to Acts xx. 7, we read that at Troas, “upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” From this passage we learn the following things:—1. It was the custom of the Church at Troas, to meet for public worship on the first day of the week—the Lord's day. 2. On the Lord's day they broke bread—celebrated the Lord's Supper. 3. The observance of the Lord's Supper was a leading part of public worship—the object of their coming together, receiving its designation from one of its most prominent religious acts—breaking bread. 4. This was done under the eye and sanction of the Apostle Paul. 5. This was the usage of the church at Troas, twenty-three years after our Lord's ascension—this event occurred about the year 56. The following is the judgment of Dwight on this passage:—“This declaration assures us that the celebration of the Lord's Supper

continued to be a weekly practice of christians until that time. Thus we learn that christians, as a body, regularly celebrated the Lord's Supper, under the authority of the apostles."

From the eleventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, we learn that when they came together in the church they did eat the Lord's Supper. This has been inferred both Erskine and Mason, from these words, taken in connexion with the context (1 Cor. xi. 20) "When ye come together in one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Their eating the Lord's Supper was *when* they came together—though their abuse of the ordinance, their eating was accounted of God as though they had not eaten; nay, worse than if they had not. Let it, however, be carefully noted, that it was not by the frequency—the constancy of celebrating the Lord's Supper, that they profaned it, and for which they were censured; but that it was for mingling with this sacred institution the festivity which they were wont to indulge in their old heathenish idol-worship. Frequency of communion the apostle leaves uncensured; nay, he tacitly, in my mind, recognizes and approves it. Still more let it be remarked, the authority which he produces, is the authority of Christ himself—1 Cor. xi. 25, 26. Christ said, "This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." The apostle adds, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." This language the ablest divines and commentators consider as sanctioning frequency of communion. I have heard said, in conversation, that the phrase, "*as often*," simply means *whenever*. But certainly the expression "*as often*" is stronger than "*whenever*," and must mean more. It evidently encourages frequency. The following is the judgment of Matthew Henry on the passage:—"It is hinted here, that this ordinance should be frequent. Our bodily meals return often, and it is fitting that this spiritual diet should be taken often too. The ancient churches celebrated this ordinance every Lord's day, not every day when they assembled for worship." Of the same judgment also were Fisher and Erskine, two of the original fathers of the Secession Church. I quote from the Catechism. "Q. How doth it appear that the death of Christ should be frequently remembered in the Supper? A. From the words of our Lord, "this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me; for as often as ye eat, &c.;" plainly implying, that it ought often to be done."

I may remark here, by the way, that if the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper when they *came together* in

church, it was *only* then. The celebration of this ordinance must be done in a church capacity—when the church comes together. Giving the sacrament, as it is called, privately, even to persons on a dying bed, is destitute of any sanction from scripture precept, or scripture example.

“Weekly communion,” says Mason, “did not die with the apostles and their contemporaries. There is a cloud of witnesses to testify that it was kept up by succeeding christians with great care and tenderness, for above two centuries. Communicating every Lord’s Day was universal; and was preserved in the Greek Church till the seventh century.”

I transcribe from Dwight, the following testimony of Justin Martyr, who was born about the close of the first century, and died about the year 130—“All christians,” says he, “both of city and country, assemble on Sunday, because our Lord rose on that day; and then we hear read the writings of the Prophets and Apostles; then the person presiding makes a speech to the congregation, exhorting them to follow and reform the things which they hear. After this, we all unite in prayer, and *then celebrate the sacrament*; and such as are able and willing, give alms.” On this testimony of Justin Martyr, Dwight makes the following remark—“Here the celebration of this ordinance is declared by an unexceptionable witness to be the regular practice of all christians throughout the world, on every Lord’s Day. The universality of this celebration, at the period specified, proves beyond debate that it was an original practice of all the Apostles.”

In the Church of Rome infrequency in communion grew with the growth of will-worship and human inventions, till at length, says Erskine, as quoted by Mason, “Those of this church esteemed themselves in so far, good enough christians that they communicated thrice a year, and that it was presumption to receive oftener.”

At length, the Council of Lateran, under Pope Innocent III., in the year 1215—that very council which established auricular confession and transubstantiation!—decided a yearly communion to be sufficient!!

The praise of Brown, of Haddington, is justly in all the churches. The following is from his Catechism:—

“Q. How frequently is the Lord’s Supper to be received?
 A. As often as we can have opportunity. Q. How prove you that?
 A. The christians in the apostolic and primitive ages received it *every* Sabbath; Christ’s death is worthy of frequent remembrance; and we frequently need this ordinance.—Acts

ii. 42, and xx. 7. *Q.* Would not frequent communicating lessen the solemnity of that ordinance? *A.* No; no more than frequent prayer, meditation, &c., lessens the solemnity of these ordinances: nay, frequent conscientious communicating tends much to advance the truly divine solemnity of it. *Q.* How so? *A.* The more frequently we have communion with Christ, the more deeply would we be affected with his majesty, holiness, and love of God, which shine in this ordinance."—Is. vi, Ps. lxxxix. 7.

The name and judgment of Calvin are justly held in veneration. Calvin's sentiments respecting the frequent observance of the Sacramental Supper, I extract from his celebrated "Institution of the Christian Religion." An antiquated translation by Norton, is the only copy which I have at hand. "The things," says Calvin, "largely show, that it was not ordained that it should be received yearly once, and that for man's sake, but that it should be in *often* use to all christians. Thus such was the use of the Apostolic Church, Luke rehearseth in the Acts, when he saith that the faithful were continuing in the doctrine of the apostles in communicating, in breaking bread, and in prayers. So it was altogether meet that there should be no assembly in the Church, without the word, prayer, *partaking of the Supper*, and alms. That this order was instituted among the Corinthians, we also sufficiently gather from Paul; and it is certain that many ages afterward it was in use. In the Council of Antioch (345) it was decreed that they which enter into the church, and hear the scriptures, should abstain from the communion, should be removed from the church till they have amended this fault." "Verily by these ordinances the holy men meant to retain and maintain the *often* use of the communion, which *often* use they had received from the Apostles themselves, which they saw to be most wholesome, and by little and little, through the negligence of the people, to grow out of use. And truly, this custom, which commandeth to communicate yearly once, *is a most certain invention of the devil*, by whose ministry soever it was brought in. For it is no doubt that then the holy supper was set before the faithful so oft as they came together in assembly: neither is it any doubt but that a good part of them did communicate together. Where a certain law was made for communicating yearly, almost all, as though they had discharged themselves for the rest of the year, sleep soundly on both ears. It ought to have been otherwise done. Every week, at least the Lord's table should have been set before the assembly."

Christians. None should be compelled of necessity, but all should be exhorted and pricked forward."—Calvin's Institution.—B. iv., c. 17. Sec. 44, 45, 46.

By the constitution of the Presbyterian church of Holland, in 1581, the Supper was appointed to be celebrated every two months.

CEPHAS.

April 20, 1833.

(*To be continued.*)

THINGS AS THEY ARE.

THE mind possesses a remarkable power of imparting its own colour to the objects which it surveys. To the man of gloomy temperament, all things appear enveloped in sombre shade; the region of his imagination is overcast with clouds—his soul has receded far from the sunshine of cheerfulness; and hence, the surrounding scenery viewed through a false medium, appears to have assumed the complexion of his own melancholy feelings. The same species of observation, modifies *events* as they transpire, and where the interest of the individual is concerned, leads him to exclaim with the Patriarch Jacob, "All these things are against me." It is this spirit, freely indulged, which produces false prophecies of calamity, to the deception and alarm of ignorant multitudes. It is something worse that enables dark-minded and designing men to work on the fears of their brethren, for the purpose of accomplishing their own objects.

On the other hand, there are men of too sanguine temperament. These have accustomed themselves to contemplate only the bright side of things. Their time is spent in day-dreams of happiness—no evil is apprehended, and of consequence no provision is made for any; they have adopted the motto, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." In this case also, the present feeling gives a colour to every object of thought, and hinders men from discovering *things as they are*.

If we would present to our own minds, or to the minds of others, a true picture of the state of the world, or of the church, there must be both "lights and shadows." In the world we discover a mixture of liberty and slavery;—the former sometimes degenerating into licentiousness, and the latter occasionally appearing with such modifications as almost conceal its enormity. Liberty, however, like the House of David, is manifestly waxing stronger and stronger; while slavery, like that of Saul,

is waxing weaker and weaker. The despotisms of Europe, many of them venerable for antiquity alone, are crumbling to decay;—already, the voice of freedom seems to have pronounced their doom. Ancient thrones are tottering to their fall, because those who sit on them tread on the necks of prostrate slaves—drive men by fear, instead of leading them by love, and stand forth as objects of terror to the imagination, without being enshrined in the heart. Accordingly nations, maddened by oppression, have arisen in their strength and hurled their lawless and cruel tyrants from the post of eminence and authority, into dreaded and ignoble obscurity. The sweets of liberty, though late, have been tasted; but that liberty has not conferred half its blessings; for christian principle was wanting, through which alone it can promote the glory of God, and the best interests of man. To the christian mind, this will account for the present state of France. Her liberty—in itself a rich inheritance—a valuable boon under Providence, has been abused—it is in fact licentiousness. Infidelity, acting as an antagonist principle, counteracts the happy tendencies of liberty, and by its bitter results, furnishes another melancholy proof that an ungodly people cannot be happy people.

Look we to our own favoured kingdom? No apprehensions are entertained respecting the stability of its throne. Our king lives in the affections of a free and generous nation. It is true, there is every shade and diversity of political creed in Britain—it is true, there are contending interests in the community, but it is equally true, that every bosom glows with sentiments of unfeigned and free-born loyalty. O that we could speak with the same satisfaction of the moral aspect of affairs among the people of the Empire. Alas! that crime in its most awful and disgusting shapes, is so prevalent, that in our own unhappy land, murder stalks abroad, not only under the covert of night, but in the light of day—that instead of respectfully, yet firmly, seeking for the redress of grievances, men should be so infatuated, as to furnish in their conduct excuses for heavier inflictions by the arm of power, and that the voice of blood should cry to the executive and to heaven for vengeance. It sickens our hearts to think of *things as they are* in the South of Ireland;—and still we fondly anticipate a favourable issue, trusting in that God who is able to bring order out of confusion.

We gladly turn from this topic, to what may be regarded more peculiarly our own department. The state of the church

demands our chief attention, and shall have it. Here, too, we had much to elevate and much to depress our feelings as christians. During the last thirty years, Britain has demonstrated what can be done in the way of missionary enterprise, for the extension of evangelical religion. Witness the great number of languages into which the scriptures have been translated, under the auspices of our religious institutions, and the great number of messengers of peace, who have been enabled by the same means, to publish to the nations, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God. And the Lord has signally blessed and countenanced the exertions of his servants. The triumphs of the gospel in many lands, but especially in the South Sea Islands, have been more extensive and more glorious than the most sanguine friends of Missions could have ventured to anticipate. Nations have literally been born to God at once, and a people as in one day. British christians, too, are blessed in their deed, and have experienced God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise, that "the liberal soul shall be made fat," and that "he that watereth shall be watered himself." The intelligence coming from a far country was as the sound of abundance of rain," to the inhabitants of a parched land; and soon the copious showers descended, clothing the landscape with verdure, and changing barrenness into fertility. Thus, there is a reciprocal communication of blessing which it does the christian's heart good to contemplate; and thus the energies which the spirit of God at first awakened to the noble work of preaching the gospel to every creature, he still sustains by exhibiting the success with which divine grace has crowned the labours of those who had no might, and by leading to single-minded dependence on the arm of an Almighty Father. Men have a "mind to the work"—their heart and soul, as it were, have been cast into the treasury of the Lord; and of their substance they cheerfully contribute, in order to bring income to others, what they know and feel to be heaven's richest blessings. Would that we could stop with such a representation; but truth demands of us an inspection of the other side of the picture, and faithful to our promise of exhibiting *things as they are*, we must endeavour to give a full and correct delineation.

Our readers will have learned from our FOURTH NUMBER, that in England Unitarianism can boast of a few flourishing congregations, and of many in a state of dilapidation. It is a matter of thankfulness to God, that the adherents of this system are not more numerous. It is not so with Popery. "Innu-

merable symptoms appear, of a prevailing disposition to contemplate the doctrines of Popery with less disgust, and to witness their progress with less alarm, than has been ever known since the Reformation. All the zeal and activity are on our side; and while every absurdity is retained, and every pretension defended, which formerly drew upon Popery the indignation and abhorrence of all enlightened christians, we should be ready to conclude from the altered state of public feeling, that a system once so obnoxious, had undergone some momentous revolution." But this is contrary to the express disavowal of Roman Catholics themselves, who still make a boast of "the infallibility of their church," and the unchanging character of their religion. Nor does Protestantism exhibit all the fair proportions, and lovely features of primitive christianity. There are many to enact the part of "lords over God's heritage," but few to be "ensamples to the flock." May we not trace, in great measure, the increase or continuance of superstition and infidelity, to the forbidding aspect, under which the doctrines of the Reformation have been presented to the public mind, and to the fact, that Ezekiel's address to the shepherds of Israel, has been too exactly realized,—“Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.”

Another circumstance which operates to the disadvantage of Protestantism, is want of *union*. Her forces are endlessly divided and subdivided, and, therefore, she is weak. United effort has achieved much in the cause of Bible and Missionary Societies; divisions have hindered much good in other causes, to which christian benevolence might have been successfully directed. Oh! that the adherents of evangelical religion would reflect on the meaning of our Saviour's prayer, that all his followers might be one, as thou, Father, says he, art in me, and I in thee, that they also, may be one in us; that the *world may believe that thou hast sent me*.

It would be unpardonable in us, when viewing *things as they are*, not to drop an observation on the present state of the North of Ireland. Politicians are every day trumpeting our praises, as a sober, moral, and religious people; and doubtless we are all that in *their* sense of the terms. If religion is to be regarded as a mere state engine, it must be confessed that its products in the North are not to be despised. But if we contemplate it as demanding holiness of heart, and holiness of character, how few give evidence of having embraced the faith of the gospel. We are not disposed to go the full

length with the respectable and zealous missionary, who lately visited these countries, and having understood the state of religion among us, exclaimed "Send me to India—to the South Sea Islands—to the frozen regions of Russia, and I shall entertain hopes of success; but send me not to the *gospel-hardened* inhabitants of the North of Ireland;" but, we ask, does not this awful testimony contain too much truth? We speak it not in anger, but in grief, that there is a fearful want of the power of godliness in this highly favoured province. In Belfast, there is not in all the houses of worship, accommodation for ONE THIRD of the inhabitants; many literally live without God in the world; hundreds are unprovided with the scriptures; and their situation were most deplorable indeed, had it not been for the successful efforts of our excellent Town Mission. Let pastors look to their flocks in this confessedly the most religious portion of the Kingdom, and say how many are men of prayer—men who have erected an altar to God in their families—men whose walk and conversation are "as it becometh the gospel of Christ?" And on the other hand, let flocks look to their pastors, and see to it, lest poison instead of wholesome food be ministered on the Lord's Day, in the public services of religion; or, which is more dangerous, in their ungodly character and conduct during the week. It is truly distressing to find persons professing to be christians, who for *five, ten, or fifteen* years, have not entered the house of prayer, and have not bowed the knee to God in their families; yet such cases are *not uncommon* in several districts of the North of Ireland.

We have in a very cursory manner, adverted to this humbling view of the state of religion among us; and we conclude, for the present, by calling on ministers of the gospel, and on all before whose eyes is the fear of the Lord, to unite in banishing for ever *that indifference* to religious principle and holy conversation, which, as a rust, is eating away the very vitals of religion! Let them arise in the might of the Lord, and rescue our land from the guilt attending an extensive profanation of God's holy ordinances; let not their hopes be destroyed, though they must be depressed by the contemplation of *things as they are*; but let them go forward, relying on the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, and adorning the doctrines of God in their Saviour in all things, and christianity will soon appear in her heavenly majesty—"Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

MISSIONARY EFFORTS IN GREECE.

(For the Christian Freeman.)

THE political fortunes of Greece have excited an interest no ordinary kind in the minds of Britons. They listened with intense eagerness to the first whisperings of the voice of freedom, and in the successful issue of the contest for liberty and independence, between the Morea and the Porte, they sincerely rejoiced. Their anxiety during the progress of the contest, and their joy on hearing of its successful issue, can easily be accounted for. "The children are spared," said Sylla, as he entered Athens, in ancient times, "because of their fathers; and we all share in the feeling which led to this decision." The present inhabitants of Greece, degenerate though they are associated in our minds with the ancient Greeks of Marathon and Thermopylæ! Their land was once the cradle of learning, the ark of liberty—the home of sages, and warriors, and poets. These historic associations procure for the present inhabitants much of that sympathy which has been so extensively, and we rejoice to add, successfully displayed.

In the minds of christian philanthropists there exist high reasons for rejoicing in the achievement of Greek independence. They rejoice to find "political wisdom successfully exercised in settling the boundaries, and adapting the internal regulations of a regenerated empire." They rejoice to find "the friendship of humanity and science lending their aid to the emancipation of the enslaved, and the instruction of the ignorant;" but they rejoice still more to find, that *now* christian philanthropy may pursue its mighty plan for the spiritual renovation of Greece, no ruthless Mahomedan band "daring to make it afraid." They regard the recent movements in Greece as furnishing a providential signal, that christianity will speedily subdue that interesting land, which was the scene of some of her first and fairest triumphs.

Much has already been effected by European christians, and much has been done by the missionary efforts of our transatlantic brethren. In the present sketch, we must confine our remarks to the operations of the London Missionary Society. This noble institution was formed for the purpose of sending the gospel to heathen countries; but the directors, being fully aware of the fallen character of the Greek church, very properly resolved to use means for the revival of religion in that church, and for the extension of religion among the inhabitants of Greece, and those countries of Asia bordering on it.

Mediterranean Sea. Their first effort was made in 1808, when they sent out, as a missionary to Malta, Mr. Weisenger. His instructions were, to remain for a time in Malta, and then to proceed to the Morea, or some one of the Greek islands, to circulate the modern Greek Testament, and otherwise promote the objects of his Mission. Mr. W. died in 1809. In 1811, the Society deputed Mr. Bloomfield to occupy the same field; soon after his arrival, this promising Missionary was summoned to his rest and reward. In 1816, Mr. and Mrs. Lowndes proceeded to the same field; and in 1818 Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were appointed as their colleagues. Proceeding according to his instructions, Mr. Lowndes settled in the island of Zante, where, in addition to his numerous engagements in preaching the gospel, he translated some valuable works into modern Greek—among others, “Mason on Self-knowledge.” In 1822, Mr. L. removed to Corfu, where he remained actively and usefully employed as a preacher of the gospel of peace; and as Secretary to the Ionian Bible Society, he has been instrumental in circulating the scriptures very extensively. Several schools have been formed and superintended by Mr. and Mrs. L. In 1824, an English school was formed. In the same year, a charity school was commenced, and has been supported chiefly by respectable British residents. In 1825, a Greek Sabbath-school was formed for boys, and, in 1829, a similar school for girls; of the latter, several have since been formed; and in all, the progress of the children is represented as highly satisfactory. Mr. L. has published several valuable works, both literary and religious, in modern Greek; he has also prepared numerous tracts, some of which have been published, by permission, at the Government press. Mr. Wilson arrived in Malta, where he applied himself to the study of modern Greek and Italian. He commenced to preach in English, and his labours were greatly blessed. In 1831, a Christian Church was organized, and Mr. W. chosen its pastor. Schools were formed in several places. Much of Mr. W.’s time has been spent in translating and publishing useful books. He has also prepared and printed numerous tracts, catechisms, and school books. The good effects of these missionary labours are found in other places, besides those in which the Missionaries reside. Thus, the books and tracts published in Malta are circulated far and wide, through all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, and the nu-

merous islands of that Sea. They have been scattered through Greece, Lesser Asia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Cyprus, Islands of the Grecian Archipelago, the Ionian Islands, and the Barbary Coast. Thus, by means of a Mission established at Malta, the inhabitants of Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, Corinth, Alexandria, &c., are enabled to read in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God. Already there may be discovered in these countries, long overrun with Mahomedan delusion and Grecian superstition, the dawning of a brighter, happier times. "Already the torch of truth is burning in various parts; and it is our privilege to hail the near approach of the period, when every valley and every mountain top shall be illumined, the arm of Mahomedan delusion completely dried up, the diversified superstitions of corrupted christianity abolished, and the beautifying influence of true religion substituted for the dreadful evils under which the people of these regions have so long groaned." The rule of the nations has opened "a great door and effectual;" let the churches enter, and "possess the land."

C.

REVIEW.

"*Tales of the Covenanters*," viz.—"*Helen of the Glen*," "*Ralph Gemmell*," and "*The Persecuted Family*." By Robert Pollok, A.M., Author of the "*Course of Time*." Edinburgh: Wm. Oliphant; and Wm. Collins, Glasgow—1833. Price 3s. 6d.

THE histories of persecuted churches afford some of the most useful lessons which christian communities can learn. The eager and blood-thirsty cruelty exercised by the oppressors shows how fiendish the nature of man must become, when it breaks through the laws of love, and surrenders itself to the guidance of the spirit of evil. The patient heroism of the sufferers manifests, how "God hath chosen the weak thing of the world to confound the things that are mighty;" and how the faith of the humble and broken-hearted can remove mountains of opposition. The tenderness of womanhood, and the feebleness of boyhood, are enabled, by grace divine, to endure persecution without flinching, and to triumph even in the agonies of death. We have, in our times, much reason to raise our hearts and voices in gratitude to Jehovah, that the torch and the faggot have ceased to blaze—the thumb-screw, and

boot, and the rack to torture; but it were unpardonable to forget that, even in Ulster, it was not always so. The principal sufferings, and the chief triumphs, however, to which the natives of this province revert, with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure, were endured and achieved in another land. Scotland is the scene of the Irish Presbyterian's religious romance. *There* was the battle of his faith fought, and *there* the victory over tyranny obtained. He delights in imagination to go to the mountain-circled glen, to witness the hoary-headed minister standing amidst the remnant of his flock, leading their devotions, or joining in the hymn of praise; and gladly does he think of him and his followers as in the very act of sealing the testimony with their blood. For ourselves, we envy not the man his feelings, or rather his want of genuine christian feelings, who could make such men and such times the subjects of ridicule and satire. We care not how preeminent ever his talents, or how dazzling so ever his fame, we decide, on this trait in his character, that his heart was not "in-the-right place." It is to us matter of regret, that the noblest and most elevating sentiments of humanity may be easily desqued; the struggles for religious freedom, may be characterized as the efforts of blind zeal; the language of the bible, beautiful and simple as it is, may be travestied—and all this, to furnish materials for the pages of a novel! But, that such things should have been done by one professing christianity, is totally incredible, did we not know it to have been the case. That a Scott, by name and nation, should have calumniated the Scottish Covenanters, was a thing which patriotism, not religion and respect for the dead, might have prevented; but they who live godly in Christ Jesus, must expect to suffer persecution here; and perhaps, it is folly to hope, that their memories will ever be held sacred by those whom the world oughteth to honour. Of one thing, however, we should be reminded, that even when an individual of mighty genius, assumes to sit in the chair of the scorner, we should not show any sympathy with him, nor join in the laugh which he attempts to raise. This idea is very eloquently expressed in the following passage from "Helen of the Glen." The father of Helen had been killed by a trooper, because she would not renounce her faith:—

How much ridicule soever, young reader, irreligion or misguided piety, may throw on her memory, or on the memories of those like her, it is to her, and to those like her, that we owe much of our civility, and the plentiful streams of the water of life which flow to—

day in the midst of our land. And shall the christian take up the books of those who deliberately laugh at their memories, and laugh along with them? Shall the Christian hear their sufferings jeered at, their motives misconstrued, and their doings misrepresented, and yet give a smile of half approbation? Were our persecuted ancestors robbed of their goods? were they hunted like the wild beasts of the mountains? were they imprisoned? were they tortured? were they banished? were they murdered? Did they set their breasts of heavenly heroism to the floods and the fires of hellish rage? Did the blood flow on the scaffold, and their groans lament on the desert, that we should drink in abundance the streams of life, and hear unmolested the glad tidings of salvation? Did they keep unslumbering watch on our hills, when the storms, and the tempests, and the darkness of hell howled and thickened over our beloved land, that we might walk in the clear and peaceful day of the Sun of Righteousness? Were their patience, and fortitude, and faith, and suffering, and death, made a spectacle to men and angels? Did the seraphim sing them a higher note? Did God lean down from the eternal heights, and be pleased to behold them? And shall we, their offspring, forget their memories, or remember them with ridicule?"

It was with a view to exhibit true and living pictures of the days of persecution, and to counteract the pernicious tendency of some popular productions, in which the motives and actions of the Covenanters are misrepresented, that Pollok composed his *Tales*, while he was yet a student at Glasgow University. They have obtained, singly, a circulation so extensive in the North of Ireland, that it is almost unnecessary for us to do more than refer to the neatness of their appearance in this collective form, and the cheapness of the price. If any of our readers have not read them, we feel that we are doing them a service by recommending this volume to their attention. They will find in it sentiments the purest and most evangelical, descriptions of scenery the boldest and most graphic; narrative the tenderest and most pathetic. But even though the volume were not in itself so excellent, it would possess an interest, containing the productions of the author of the "*Course of Time*." There must be about the relics of such a man, something quite irrespective of intrinsic value. This great poet is one of the noblest unfinished* works which English literature presents. As a *whole*, it cannot be compared with productions of the highest merit; but it contains passages of amazing power and eloquence. The sketch of Byron is sublime, and is infinitely more just than any thing on the same subject, that has yet appeared. Undazzled by the splendour

* Pollok died at the early age 27, not long after he had been licensed Preacher of the gospel, in the United Secession Church of Scotland. The "*Course of Time*" was composed chiefly in the intervals of his attendance at the Divinity Hall, under the care of Dr. Mitchell, and the late Dr. Dick. This will account for its being "unfinished."—EDIT.

at mighty-minded but miserable man, Pollok portrays, with accuracy and faithfulness, the mingled grandeur and littleness of his character ; and forms a candid judgment of his life and death. We refer to this, merely as an interesting specimen of a poem ; but the views of Hell and Heaven, the descriptions of the judgment-day, of the degeneracy of the world previous to that great event, and of the millennial glory, as well as the numerous and varied delineations of individual character, are all executed with the most masterly hand. In short among modern poems, "The Course of Time" stands unique, alone, and unimitable. It is well said in the inscription upon his tomb, that "His immortal poem is his monument." In it he has bequeathed to the votaries of fancy, an illustrious example. He has shown that evangelical religion can furnish themes that will yield to none in dignity, interest, and splendour—themes, that may yet regenerate and revive our sinking literature, while they will exalt our national character, and purify the national mind. H.

THE SECESSION CHURCH.

IN the fourth number of the *Christian Freeman*, I gave a historical account of the remote and immediate causes of the secession from the Established Church in Scotland. We have seen that the Commission of the General Assembly, did, on the 16th November, 1733, only by the casting vote of Mr. John Goldie, the Moderator, and in opposition to the petitions of seven out of fifteen synods for a delay of proceedings, separate the four ASSOCIATE BRETHREN, Ebenezer Erskine, Ayr ; John Aird, Glasgow ; William Wilson, Perth ; Alexander Moncrief, Aberdeen ; and James Fisher, Kinclaven, from ministerial connexion with the Established Church, and with their respective charges ; causing, in the true priestly spirit, intimation of the sentence to be given to the *Civil Power*. Supported by their respective sessions and churches—and, above all, supported—as Ebenezer Erskine, on his death-bed, said of himself in relation to the storms through which he had passed, "by a good cause, a good conscience, and a good God," they did, on the spot, and in the face of their ecclesiastical oppressors, declare a Secession ;—a secession, not from the Presbyterian government, or evangelical doctrines of the church, as prohibited in the Westminster Standards, but from a prevailing

party, who had been carrying on a course of defection by a series of violent and unconstitutional measures. We have seen that, on the 6th Dec., 1733, the four brethren did, at the Bridge of Gairney, a village three miles south of Kinross, assemble in prayer and conference for two days, constitute themselves, under the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King, Head, and Lawgiver of his Church, into the Associate Presbytery.

I would deem it a species of insult to the memory of those intrepid and holy men, whose characters have stood out before the public eye for a century, braving the storm of ecclesiastical strife, did I think it needful to mention that their most inveterate enemies have never dared to charge them with any thing heretical or immoral. They held fast the doctrines of the Reformation—they were strict Presbyterians—they were powerful preachers—their piety was ardent—their lives were blameless. Though objects of resentment to those whom conscience constrained them to withstand—they were beloved by multitudes of the wise, the pious, and the good. They were no mere party leaders. Though compelled to form a separate communion, their object was not to create a sect. They were no mob-agitators—no Diotrepheses, loving to have the pre-eminence—dark spirits stirring up by falsehood and misrepresentation under the hypocritical pretence of religion, the rancorous passions of the multitude for the gratification of bad ambition, or of base revenge. They were dissenters, but not sectarians—they were Seceders, but not schismatics. They declared a SECESSION, but not until they were compelled to do so in self-defence—not until they had been deprived of the right of entering their protests—not until they had endeavoured to reclaim the corrupt party, and not until they were violently and unwarrantably thrust out by a sentence of the Assembly's Commission, for refusing to withdraw a protest which they felt themselves bound to enter against the unjust censure passed on Ebenezer Erskine. The whole of the offence alleged against Erskine, was, that in preaching against the anti-christian law of patronage, he had used certain expressions "tending to disquiet the peace of the church, and *impugning several acts of Assembly and church judicatories!*" And then, when the four brethren had protested against the act of censure which had been passed, because they refused to do what to them must have been a violation of truth and conscience—what they could not have done without making themselves guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy—namely, to "express sorrow for the

conduct and misbehaviour in protesting" against the Assembly's sentence—a sentence in their view iniquitous—they must be thrust out of the synagogue—declared "no longer ministers of the church!!"

It is worthy of remark, that the very party which proceeded with such severity and indecent haste, to force Erskine and his brethren out of the church, was the very same party which welcomed such men as Professor Simpson and M'Gill, of Ayr, men who had openly taught Arian, Socinian or Pelagian heresy—a party well known as erroneous in their own doctrines—a party which forced in the nominees of patrons on resisting congregations—a party which had laboured to suppress ministerial freedom and stifle opposition to defection, by procuring a pact, prohibiting the recording of protests. From this overbearing party, did the Associate Brethren dissent; but they professed willingness to hold communion with all faithful ministers in the national church, wrestling like themselves against prevailing defections. On the other hand, the venerable Gabriel Wilson, of Maxton, and six other ministers, joined in protest, that they should be at liberty to testify against the defections of the prevailing party, and to hold communion with their "dear brethren," as if no such sentence had been passed against them.

The sentence passed on the Associate Brethren, it may be useful to remark, while it was totally unwarrantable, and was shortly after unconditionally reversed, was not one of degradation. It merely declared them out of ministerial connexion with the Established Church—"No longer ministers of *this* church." It did not deprive them of their spiritual ministry; even though they should be thrust out of their livings and out of the Establishment. Had the sentence even gone the length of the greater excommunication, it could not, on such grounds, have invalidated that "ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus," nor cast them out of that spiritual church of which Christ is the living head, and of which they were living members and co-laborers. Luther, Calvin, Knox—the Churches of England and Scotland—all Protestant Churches, lie under a sentence of excommunication and anathema from him of Rome. And what are they the worse for this? The curse cautions shall not come. Bad as he was, Balaam spoke sense and truth, when he replied to the tempting offers that were made to persuade him to curse Israel, "How shall I curse, whom the Lord hath not cursed? How shall I defy, whom the

Lord hath not defied? Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel."

The constitution of a distinct communion is a solemn step, and so the Associate Brethren felt it. They were no firebrand fanatics, but men who tempered zeal with gravity and caution. Fully aware of the extraordinary circumstances in which Providence had placed them—deeply impressed with a sense of the responsibility of their conduct—desiring to combine prudence with firmness, and wishing to place themselves entirely under the guidance of the Spirit of God, it was not until after a meeting held, according to previous concert, for prayer and deliberation, and continued for two days, that they came to the decision of constituting themselves into a Presbytery. Various weighty reasons determined them to adopt this course. They felt themselves placed in new and trying circumstances—and they desired to enjoy that mutual advice, comfort, and co-operation, which are to be found in union. They were men of piety and prayer, and they wished to be in the way of the promise—"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." They were strict Presbyterians according to the Westminster "Presbyterial form of Church Government," and they wished to maintain that form of church order to which they were attached, not only by education and habit, but from a conviction of its divine authority. The right of the christian people to choose their pastors had been invaded, and they wished to be in a capacity for supplying the means of grace to those who could not conscientiously receive objectionable ministers nominated by patrons, and violently obstructed by an Erastian party in the church courts.

Though the ejected brethren had declared a secession, and constituted themselves into a presbytery, they gave another evidence, that "he that believeth shall not make haste."—Weighing well the consequences, and abstaining from everything that might wear the appearance of rashness, or of pushing matters at once, and irrevocably, to extremities, they resolved to defer proceeding further than holding their meeting for mutual advice and asking counsel of God, until they should ascertain whether or not the church courts should repent and do their first works. In the meantime, in May, 1734, the Associate Presbytery published their first "Testimony." In this document they exhibit the grounds of their secession from the National Church. The following is a summary of the reasons:—

1. The arbitrary and tyrannical measures pursued by the prevailing party, subversive of the presbyterial constitution of the church, the rights of the christian people, and of the privileges of ministers as members of the church courts. The facts adduced in proof of this are, the violent ordination of seceding ministers in reclaiming parishes—the Act of Assembly, 1730, depriving aggrieved ministers of the liberty of marking their disapprobation in the minutes of the court—the act of Assembly, 1732, providing that where patrons should neglect or decline presenting to parishes, the right of election should be vested in heritors and elders, excluding the people—the decree of Assembly, 1733, discharging the Presbytery of interference, under pain of the highest censure, from administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper to those who should refuse to submit to obtruded ministers—the allowing of the Assembly's Commission to erect sub-commissions for the anti-presbyterial purpose of ordaining ministers, should *presbyteries* as well as *parishes* refuse their settlement;—finally, not only the bidding of reasons of dissent to be marked, but the subjecting to church censure those who employed that method of generating their consciences and resisting mal-administration.

2. The Associate Presbytery declared, as another ground of their secession, that the prevailing party had been pursuing a course subversive of evangelical truth. Processes on account of error had been discountenanced, and persons who had taught sentiments inconsistent with the leading doctrines of christianity, had been retained in the ministry without adequate censure. Professor Simpson, it was proved, had taught sentiments in opposition to the doctrine of original sin; he had taught that the souls of infants were as pure as the soul of Adam was in his original condition—and that the light of nature, including tradition, is sufficient to teach men the way of salvation. The Assembly, instead of removing him from his divinity professorship, merely prohibited him from publishing such sentiments in future.

3. The Associate Presbytery did not declare their secession from the National Church only on the ground of error and infection, but also because the dominant party had carried forward their measures in an arbitrary and unconstitutional manner, and because they had obstinately resisted the efforts used to reclaim them. This party, while it spared the erroneous in doctrine, and the irregular in conduct, bore down the christian people intending for their religious privileges, and those ministers who had testified faithfully against ecclesiastical mal-administration.

The unwarrantable rigour of the Commission in thrusting the four brethren out of the National Church, merely because they refused to express sorrow for entering a protest, contrasted with the laxity of discipline exercised in cases of heresy—the high ground which the brethren boldly assumed—their wisdom, firmness, caution, and moderation—a conviction entertained by great numbers both of ministers and people, that the brethren had been badly used, and that they stood up for nothing but the real reformation principles of the Scottish Church,—conspired to produce an immense impression in their favour in the public mind. The precipitation of the Commission, and the blind, headstrong mal-administration of the prevailing party were generally condemned. A secession had been declared, its leaders were popular; the severity with which they had been treated had enlisted the public sympathy on their side; they were champions of the people's rights; they were bold and fearless defenders of gospel truth:—these considerations forced many to “doubt whereunto this would grow.” Something, it was felt, must be done to arrest the downward tide of defection, and check the power of a party who had carried, by their ascendancy in the Assembly for years, a series of the most pernicious measures. The consequences of a rent in the Established Church under such circumstances, were clearly foreseen and justly dreaded. It was felt, therefore, that it would be expedient to extend overtures of conciliation and concession to the ejected brethren.

Influenced by such weighty considerations, the strict party of the Scottish Establishment, exerted themselves vigorously in the choice of members to compose the General Assembly of 1734. That assembly was accordingly different from many that had preceded it. The downward course of things received an evident check. The spirit displayed was conciliatory. The Act of 1730, prohibiting protests, was rescinded. So also was the act of 1732, empowering heritors and elders, to the exclusion of the people, to elect where patrons did not nominate. The anti-presbyterial power usurped by the Commission of ordaining presentees in opposition to both parish and presbytery, was taken away. And the Assembly, while on the one hand, it refused to pass any censure on the unrighteous and sinful conduct of the church courts, which had condemned and ejected the four Brethren, yet, on the other hand, without requiring from these Brethren the slightest submission, sorrow, or retractation, for their protests, testimony of secession, did pass an act, authorising the Synod of Per-

Stirling to restore them to their connexion with the National Church.

Pursuant to this act of Assembly, the Synod did, at its meeting on the 2nd July, 1734, take off the sentence against the ejected Brethren, now in a state of declared secession, and pronounced them reinstated in their former connexion.

It was, however, too late—the corrupt party resumed their power—their evil counsels prevailed—grievances were left unredressed, and abuses unreformed. An insuperable barrier against a return to the Established Church, was thus presented to the minds and consciences of the Secession brethren. The Secession still flourishes; and the 16th day of November 1833, will be its centenary.

This being a convenient resting place, I pause here for the present, and shall give Ebenezer Erskine's reasons why the Associate brethren could not unite with the National Church, until it should present decided evidence of reformation. These reasons are contained in a letter addressed by Erskine, to the Moderator of the Presbytery of Stirling, inviting him to return and become their Moderator.—It is dated, Stirling, January, 1735. The following are extracts:—

REVEREND SIR,—The Reverend Presbytery, at their last meeting in this place, having done me the honour to choose me for their Moderator, and to send two of their members to invite me to take the chair, I returned such an answer as occurred at the time, with my thanks to the Reverend Brethren who had put that piece of respect on me.

The return I made, if I rightly remember, was, that matters were now come to that situation both with respect to the Established Church and the four Brethren, that, for my own part, until I saw some other steps taken towards reformation than any that had yet appeared to me, I could not accede to communion with the judicatories, and consequently could not accept of the Moderator's chair in the Presbytery of Stirling.

If, in this case, the charge of schism be cast upon the four Brethren, it must be either because of the irregularity of their departure from the judicatories, the paucity of their number, the badness of the cause they have espoused, the equity of the sentence ejecting them, or their acting in an inconsistency with their ordination vows. The *first* will not be alleged, in regard the four Brethren, whatever ground of withdrawing there might be from these men who were talking disorderly, yet they never went out of the judicatories till they were thrust out. It cannot be laid upon the *paucity* of their numbers when compared with the multitude against them; because it would condemn Caleb and Joshua, Elijah, Micaiah, and, in short, all the witnesses that ever appeared for Christ and his cause in cases of defection. Not the *badness* of their cause; for, as they considered, according to their measure, for the covenanted doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of the Reformed Church of Scot-

land, before their ejection, so now that they are ejected, they espouse no other cause, as appears from their printed testimony, and grounds of secession. Is it because we *did not submit*, according to ordination vows, to the rebukes, suspensions, and other sentences of judicatories? I answer, if these sentences had been founded upon the word of God and the approved practice and acts of the Church of Scotland, our non-submission would, no doubt, have inferred the charge. But the case was quite otherwise; the sentences were arbitrary and inconsistent with the word of God, and the rules of the Church; and we could not submit to them without betraying a testimony, and prostituting our ministry to the pleasure of men, and so should not be the servants of Christ.

"Is it because, now that the door is opened, *we do not return* to the communion of the Established Church? I answer, that there is a difference to be made betwixt the Established Church of Scotland and the Church of Christ in Scotland; for I reckon that the last is in great measure driven into the wilderness by the first. And since God in his adorable providence, has led us into the wilderness with her, I judge it our duty to tarry with her for a while there, and to prefer her afflictions to all the advantages of a legal establishment, in communion with judicatories as they stand at present. And this I firmly believe is no schism before the Lord, whatever it may be reckoned in the eyes of the world.

"I know it is strenuously pleaded, that what was done by the last Assembly lays a sufficient ground for our accession, notwithstanding all that is past. I cannot help differing from those that are of that opinion. I humbly conceive there is a great difference betwixt positive reformation, and a stop or sist given to a deformation. I am far from derogating from the stand made by the worthy members of the last Assembly against the career of the corrupt party. I allow me to say, that to me any thing done appears rather a check or restraint upon those men for a time, than any real cleanly reformation. We have not heard of their repenting of their evil deeds. The party are as numerous in judicatories, and acted [actuated] by the same spirit of defection as ever; and, for the most part, carry the affairs of Christ's kingdom, in inferior courts, in the same channel, since the Assembly of 1734, as before.

"Some Brethren call us to come in and help them against the current of defection. But now that the hand of Providence has taken us out of the current against which we were swimming, and set us up on the reformation ground by a solemn testimony and constitution, would be vain for us to endanger ourselves by running into the current again, unless our reverend Brethren, who call for our help, could persuade us that our so doing will turn the current and save both them and ourselves, and so preserve the Lord's work and testimony. In my opinion, it would be by far much safer for these Brethren to come out of the dangerous current to us, than for us now to come back to the Jer. xv. 19--21. No doubt, worldly interest gives a strong bias against this motion; but if it be duty, we are bound to forsake all and follow the Lord."

"The last Assembly ordered the Synod of Perth and Stirling to cast open the doors, and invite us back to ministerial communion, when accordingly, was done. But, were the sentences of rebuke, suspension, and excommunication declared groundless, arbitrary, or inconsistent

the word of God, and that ministerial freedom which God has showed in witnessing publickly against public defections? Nay, the word is expressly *inhibite* from meddling with any thing that was past *inde*; by which means truth falls in the streets, and the consideration of equity cannot enter, and the authority of the Church interdicted in these acts and censures still abides untouched, however *injust*; only an attempt is made to remove the effect without touching the cause."

BEDE.

SAURIN'S OBSERVATIONS.

THE elegant and eloquent Saurin, while surveying the *providential care* of God, in reference to his Church, in the help which has been afforded, and the service which has been done to it, even by some of its greatest enemies, inquires,—

"Who would have thought that the ambitious Clement,* maintain some chimerical rights which the pride of the clergy had forged, and which the cowardice of the people and the timidity of their princes had granted; who would have believed that this ambitious pope, by hurling the thunders of the papal anathema against the king, would have given the first stab to a tyranny which he intended to confirm?

"Who would have imagined that Zuinglius would have had such amazing success among people the most inviolably attached, of any in the world, to the customs of their predecessors—a people scrupulously retaining even the dress of their ancestors—a people, above all, so inimical to innovations in religion, that they would hardly bear to have a new explication of a passage of Scripture, a new argument, or a modern critical remark;—who would have supposed that they could have been persuaded to embrace a religion diametrically opposite to that which they had imbibed with their mother's milk?

"Who would have believed, that Luther could have surmounted the obstacles that opposed the success of his preaching in Germany; and that the proud Emperor, Charles V., who reckoned among his captives, pontiffs and kings, could not produce one insignificant monk?

"Who would have thought that the barbarous tribunal of the Inquisition, which had enslaved so many nations to superstition, should have been one of the principal causes of the reformation in the United Provinces?"

With men, these things seemed and were impossible; but,

with Him who manages the affairs of his Church, "all things are possible !"

Original Poetry.

SCRIPTURE SONGS—NO. IV.

2 SAMUEL i. 19-27.

How fallen are the mighty!—all mangled and low,
 On the mountains, the beauty of Israel lies;
 Let Gath hear it not—let not Askelon know,
 Lest the song of their daughters in triumph arise.
 O ! barren for ever be Gilboa's field,
 Where the soul of the monarch grew dark in dismay,
 And th' anointed of heaven abandoned his shield,
 And fled in disgrace from the combat away.
 There never more may the summer shower bring
 Its boon of refreshing to gladden the ground,
 Or the night dew descend, or the harvest-time fling,
 Its treasures of gladness and plenty around.
 Beloved of my soul ! from its death-aiming path,
 Thy shaft in the toil of the battle ne'er strayed ;
 And the sword of the king never fell in its wrath,
 But the blood of the foeman was red on its blade.
 They fell side by side, as together in life
 United in gentle affection they grew ;
 Tho' bolder than lions they fought in the strife,
 And swifter than eagles to combat they flew.
 Daughters of Israel ! weep o'er the king,
 No more shall he deck you all bright to behold ;
 O'er the robes of your beauty no more shall he fling,
 The richest of jewels—the purest of gold.
 The mighty are fallen—they fell in the fight—
 In the midst of the foe, they on Gilboa fell ;
 O Jonathan ! slain on the mountain's far height—
 Friend of my bosom, for ever farewell.
 Dear, dear, was the love which we bore to each other,
 And warm our affection as any could be ;
 More precious by far, than the love of a brother,
 And sonder than woman's, was thine unto me.
 O fallen are the mighty ! no longer they wield
 The weapons of war in the motionless hand :
 The spear is all shattered, and broken the shield,
 And prostrate the valour—the pride of the land !

Belfast, 1st May, 1833.